

Mental Health Update

April 22, 2005

Ockert Report

The Department of Health has received a written report from ex-JCAHO surveyor Carroll “Bud” Ockert, who inspected Vermont State Hospital on April 8. Ockert gave an oral report at the end of his inspection (See last week’s Update) and followed up this week with a preliminary written report. Ockert had been asked to report on two categories of findings: serious threats to health and safety, and lesser dangers that need correction.

Actions are being taken to address Ockert’s findings. Hospital officials, in cooperation with Building and General Services, hope to have diffuser security screws in place by May 1 (they are on order) and install boxes to conceal the exposed plumbing fixtures, which will require key access, by June 15 (requires design work and bid). The problem with the electrical cords will have been fixed by the end of the week.

The Ockert report will be posted on the department’s website next week.

Transformation Grant Meetings

Following the first meeting of the Stakeholder group, which took place on April 13, a smaller workgroup met with the writer to synthesize the information from the larger meeting. Consumers participated in both meetings, and they are an integral part of the process. The next Stakeholder group meeting will be on April 27 at the Vermont Department of Health, Room 2B, in Burlington. A draft of the framework for the grant application will be presented for review at this meeting.

Child, Adolescent and Family Standing Committee To Meet

The committee is set to meet on Monday, April 25, in Waterbury. Agenda items include discussion of upcoming site visits to Healthcare and Rehabilitation Services of Southeastern Vermont and review of recommendations from the Act 264 Advisory Board related to the system of care plan.

Forensic Exam Legislation Proposed

Vermont law authorizes the commissioner of health to designate community hospitals for court-ordered inpatient forensic examinations. 18 V.S.A. §7401. However, the statutes do not give district courts latitude in issuing orders for examinations because Vermont State Hospital is specifically identified as the sole location for inpatient examinations. 18 V.S.A. §4815.

The department has drafted a proposed revision to clarify the commissioner's power to designate hospitals other than VSH as locations for inpatient forensic examinations. The proposed revision would also permit the courts to order an inpatient examination at any hospital designated by the commissioner. An inpatient examination court order would convey the individual to the care and custody of the commissioner, as opposed to any specific hospital. The commissioner then would have the authority to determine the optimal clinical setting for the patient, and to transfer patients accordingly.

Feedback on the proposed revision is being sought from community partners, stakeholders and the judiciary.

'Now' Always the Best Time To Help Kids Headed for Trouble

Deputy Commissioner of Health for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs Barbara Cimaglio has written an article about youth alcohol use in Vermont and the importance of intervention and prevention. The article was distributed widely to newspapers throughout Vermont.

The article suggests using the occasion of Alcohol Awareness Month as an opportunity to discuss the issue with young people and as an opportunity to look at our own attitudes and behaviors. The full article is posted at: <http://www.healthyvermonters.info>.

Governing Body

The Vermont State Hospital Governing Body met on Wednesday and approved revisions to the following policies:

- Duty To Warn
- Emergency Involuntary Procedures
- Treatment Review Panel
- Escorting Patients
- Transport

The text of the revised policies are posted at www.HealthyVermonters.info/mh/mhindex.shtml.

Deputy Search

As of mid-week, the number of applications received for the position of deputy commissioner of health for mental health services remains at just over a dozen.

The small advisory group met Wednesday. The group identified additional organizations that should have representation in the group and provided guidance for the selection process. Participants in this group include members of the state standing committees.

Highlights from the working timeline (depending upon number of applications received):

- Week of April 25: Develop application screening/rating tool based on job description, community feedback from web postings, and advisory group input from Wednesday meeting; develop interview questions; communicate with standing committees to advise of progress to

- date and request time on upcoming agendas.
- Week of May 2: Advisors begin reviewing applications, selecting candidates for phone interviews.
 - Week of May 9: Present progress report to Adult Standing Committee.
 - Week of May 16: Begin phone interviews.
 - Week of May 23: Present progress report to Child, Adolescent & Family Standing Committee.
 - Week of May 30: Begin interviews in person, including group interviews.

VSH Census

The census at Vermont State Hospital was 45 as of midnight Wednesday.